

November 19, 1951

Dr. Barbara Wright
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Dear Barbara:

Thank you for letting us see your manuscript, which is returned herewith. I am looking forward to seeing your extensive analysis: this seems to be only a hint of the main course to come. As far as this paper goes, I can see nothing wrong with it. You seem to say that unless we have overlooked some rather subtle methodological fallacies (which can be endless) we have a case of induced "mutation".

It would be useful to know whether the capacity to grow in the absence of serine or glycine is a mutation in a strict sense. Have you studied this phenomenon in organisms which can be crossed (i.e., K-12 or Neurospora?) I have a vague recollection of your telling me something along these lines, but have forgotten. Did you find the tartrate effect only in your original mutant, or does it occur more generally? For the possibility that the adaptation is not a mutation, I have in mind some sort of triggering of an alternative pathway, but it would be remarkable if serine or glycine itself could not do it.

I am glad to see that you don't pay too much attention to the hesitation of Ryan, myself, etc. about wholeheartedly accepting the most spectacular conclusions that can be drawn about this work. Those reservations are based far more on prejudgments than on your experiments. We are still entitled to wait and see how the conclusions will turn out in the end; meanwhile, I hope you don't go so far out on the limb that you won't be able to climb back if something unexpected happens. But if your further publications are as circumspect as this one, no one need complain.

Thank you for your comments on "ay" book (which, by the way, I don't think Winge cared much about). It has been indispensable for teaching my course, but the Press would never publish it unless some other people could be persuaded to buy it.

Best wishes,

Joshua Lederberg

